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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [EFIN](#) [UNGA](#) [KGHG](#) [KPAL](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE MEETS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT
D'ESCOTO

Classified By: Ambassador Rice, for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

¶1. (C) During an introductory call on General Assembly President (PGA) Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on February 11, Ambassador Rice underscored U.S. priorities for renewed engagement with the United Nations, but cautioned the PGA against divisive actions. D'Escoto expressed his strong enthusiasm for the new U.S. administration and hoped President Obama would consider attending a June high-level GA conference on the financial crisis, at which time he could possibly also attend a mini-climate change summit proposed by the Secretary-General. D'Escoto revealed that he has been approached about serving as a channel of communication for Hamas to key players, but listened intently to the Ambassador's arguments against that. End summary.

Renewed Engagement, Inviting POTUS

¶2. (C) The PGA conducted his 50-minute, February 11 introductory meeting with Ambassador Rice one-on-one, expressing his joy over President Obama's election and what it portends for the community of nations. He repeated that the world could not succeed without a positive role by the U.S., and vowed that we all must "come together" in this "Year of Reconciliation." Noting that he had already issued an invitation last November for the President to address the General Assembly, d'Escoto urged that such a visit be timed to coincide with the high-level conference on the world financial and economic crisis that the PGA is organizing for early June. D'Escoto added that Secretary-General (SYG) Ban could also use that visit for arranging the "mini-summit" on climate change that the SYG has been hoping to organize in March or April, but which in d'Escoto's view is now unlikely to happen. (Note: The PGA and SYG held a coordination meeting earlier in the day, according to d'Escoto's staff, but it is unlikely the SYG has endorsed the PGA's vision for such a combined visit. End note.) Ambassador Rice noted that President Obama's calendar is highly crowded.

¶3. (U) Noting the PGA's ambitious plans for the high-level financial crisis conference in June, Ambassador Rice cautioned that the conference must not overlap and complicate the various other international initiatives and fora addressing the crisis. She argued that the PGA's event should focus specifically on the crisis' impact on development, as indeed was decided by member states at last December's Financing for Development Conference in Doha. At this point, d'Escoto ushered in his nephew and "Senior Advisor" Michael Clark, who assured the Ambassador that he was coordinating closely with the IMF, World Bank, and UK Prime Minister (and G-20 host) Gordon Brown's office to ensure the GA process was not working at cross-purposes.

A Channel for Hamas?

14. (C) D'Escoto confided that he had questioned Palestinian President Abbas six weeks ago on his contacts with Hamas, with Abbas replying that Hamas had rejected his overtures. While Egypt was already serving as the communication channel for Hamas, the PGA claimed that Abbas suggested d'Escoto also consider serving as a channel. D'Escoto's friend and confidante Ramsey Clark then returned from a visit to Lebanon and Jordan bearing the contact information for Hamas representatives in those countries. But d'Escoto said he had as yet taken no action, in part because of the Israeli elections, and in part because he was uncertain of using any Hamas contacts not located in Gaza. Ambassador Rice urged caution, reminding d'Escoto that the UN is a member of the Quartet and has set pre-conditions for dealing with Hamas, and that the PGA is a representative of the UN. D'Escoto claimed it had not occurred to him that he would be seen as a UN representative, and underscored his agreement with the Quartet's preconditions. He also claimed to be wounded by various accusations that he is anti-Israeli, and pledged his recognition of Israel's right to exist.

Surprised to Still Be Alive

15. (SBU) The PGA recounted his various health problems and admitted that he did not expect, upon assuming the GA Presidency in September, that he would survive his 1-year

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term. But he told the Ambassador that he feels renewed strength and is confident of completing his term. He enthusiastically accepted an offer to receive a copy of President Obama's book "Dreams From My Father," and noted that he had met the previous day with progressive U.S. evangelist and founder of Sojourners, Jim Wallis. D'Escoto repeated the list of his personal heroes, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi, and 20th Century Catholic social activist Dorothy Day.
Rice